

NEWS OF THE SCREEN—GOSSIP OF THE MOTION PICTURE STUDIOS

The New Movies

By ROBERT E. SHERWOOD.

THE old battle between commercialism and art goes merrily on.

As usual, each bout ends with the victors firmly on the mat and the supporters of commercialism preparing a victorious snake dance through the streets. In all their various combats, which have been going on ever since coin was first introduced into an otherwise perfect world, art has invariably come out second best. It may have scored a few moral victories, to be sure, but that is small satisfaction, as any Yale man will be glad to tell you.

Commercialism is not only a formidable adversary in itself, but it has all the public's support. Its cheering section occupies the entire grandstand, while the adherents of art can be comfortably accommodated in the press box.

For instance, there has been a picture at the Rivoli during the last week entitled "The Impossible Mrs. Bellevue." Gloria Swanson is its star and Sam Wood its director.

The critics on the New York newspapers were almost unanimous in hailing "The Impossible Mrs. Bellevue" as a particularly pretentious bit of bunk. None of them could think up a good word to say for it. And yet the public went right ahead as though nothing had happened and favored this film with its patronage to such an extent that it has been moved to the Rivoli for a second week on Broadway. What is more, it is sure to carve out a highly profitable career for itself all over the country, if one may believe those omens sent down by the gods of the box office.

In fact the criticisms of "The Impossible Mrs. Bellevue" have apparently carried as much weight with the film fans as the "Don't Get Hurt!" signs with the taxi drivers.

There is another case at hand which demonstrates the same facts in a different manner.

Last winter Will Rogers appeared in a picture called "One Glorious Day." It was a strange, eerie affair, which bore absolutely no resemblance to any movie that had ever been seen before. The New York critics praised it enthusiastically, saying that it was amusing, sympathetic, and, above all, original. It was a distinct credit to the screen.

But the public at large either failed to read these criticisms or paid no attention to them, for "One Glorious Day" turned out to be one glorious flop. The box office reports were as chilly as the reviews were warm.

The proprietor of the Fairland Theater in White Castle, Ind., had this to say about it: "As punk as ever seen on my screen. Patrons left before they saw it all. Crazy and nothing to it." The same sentiments were expressed by an exhibitor who showed it at the Palm Theater in Lindsay, Neb. "Sold her! Funk. Lay off. Too much impossible stuff and altogether too silly to offer intelligent people."

The italics are ours, but the words themselves are direct quotations from the Box Office Record of the Exhibitor's Herald—a thoroughly reliable source, be it said.

These two instances that I have mentioned—"The Impossible Mrs. Bellevue" and "One Glorious Day"—are extreme cases, to be sure. There have been a great many photoplays upon which the critics and the fans have agreed, including "Tolable David," "The Three Musketeers" and "The Kid."

As a general rule, however, the opinion of the New York critics—and of the New York audiences, for that matter—is of small value outside the moist boundaries of Manhattan. Pictures which fill the Capitol or the Strand are frequently rejected by the inhabitants of White Salmon, Wash.

The reason for this is fairly obvious.

New Yorkers look at pictures through the eyes of practiced theatergoers. They were paying money in at the box office long before the first Gaumont and Pathe comedies were ever shown at the Eden Musee on Twenty-third street. They understand the conventions of the theater—they have followed its progress carefully—and they have attained a degree of sophistication which is bound to influence their attitude toward motion pictures.

In the small towns the great majority of movie fans have never progressed beyond the "East Lynne" stage. Their knowledge of the drama goes no further than the days when Owen Davis and Lincoln J. Carter were in their prime. They have never been fed upon the works of Eugene O'Neill, or Shaw, or Galsworthy, or even Clare Kummer, and their point of view is limited.

Consequently such pictures as "Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?" "Rags to Riches" and "More to Be Piled Than Scored" hit them directly between the eyes. These conform to their idea of sterling drama, while "One Glorious Day," "The Cabaret of Dr. Caligari" and "Broken Blossoms" are too modern for them to understand.

The movie producers, therefore, are confronted with a large problem. They must make pictures which will be sophisticated enough to please the audiences in the big cities and unsophisticated enough to get over in the outlying districts. They must appeal both to the ultrawise element in Times square and the corned beef folks in Gopher Prairie.

Nineteen times out of twenty they manage to forget that the ultrawise element exists; and in that way they save themselves from a most embarrassing dilemma and also make a great deal of money.

Sometimes, perhaps, it will be possible to make different grades of pictures for different grades of audiences, just as the theater has done.

But that time is not yet.

The coming week will yield three pictures which will be watched with

Some Faces to Be Seen in the New Pictures



JACKIE COOGAN IN "THE TOWN THAT FORGOT GOD" STRAND



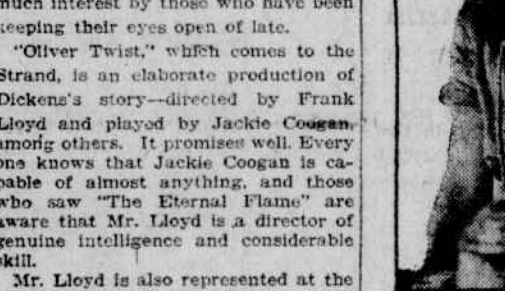
MISS HELENE CHADWICK AND RICHARD DIX IN "THE SIN FLOOD" CAPITOL



MISS JANE THOMAS IN "THE TOWN THAT FORGOT GOD" ASTOR THEATER



DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS IN "THE SIN FLOOD" LYRIC THEATER



THOMAS MEIGHAN AND MISS LEATRICE JOY IN "THE MAN WHO SAW TOMORROW" RIVOLI THEATER



DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS IN "THE SIN FLOOD" LYRIC THEATER

much interest by those who have been keeping their eyes open of late.

"Oliver Twist," which comes to the Strand, is an elaborate production of Dickens's story—directed by Frank Lloyd and played by Jackie Coogan, among others. It promises well. Every one knows that Jackie Coogan is capable of almost anything, and those who saw "The Eternal Flame" are aware that Mr. Lloyd is a director of genuine intelligence and considerable skill.

Mr. Lloyd is also represented at the Capitol with "The Sin Flood," which was commented upon in these columns last Sunday.

Douglas Fairbanks in "Robin Hood" opens at the Lyric on Monday evening. This is the greatest effort of his strenuous career, and he is prepared to stand or fall by it. Chicago has already welcomed the picture with the conventional, open arms, and there is every indication that New York will do likewise.

At any rate, Doug and Mary will be present at the opening, and the Forty-second street traffic cops are already training for the event.

Tarkington Stories.

Booth Tarkington is being extensively represented on the screen these days. "Clarence" has lately been seen here, and now comes word that three more of his stories are soon to be produced.

Douglas Fairbanks will do "Monsieur Beaucaire" as his next picture. The story was eagerly sought for by several other producers—among whom might be listed Penrhyn Stanlaw—and probably commanded a high price when finally sold. It is a matter of speculation as to how Mr. Fairbanks will handle the ending, which is not at all the sort of ending that film fans demand.

"Alice Adams," which many consider Mr. Tarkington's greatest novel, is to be played by Florence Vidor—a happy choice, if you ask us, although Lois Wilson would have been an ideal one. Here again the adapter's problem is difficult, for "Alice Adams" possesses all those qualities which do not photograph well.

It is also announced that Mr. Tarkington will write a story especially for Thomas Meighan. Its exact nature has not been disclosed, but there will be a great many children in the cast.

Random Notes.

The cast for "Only a Shopgirl" includes such well known players as Mae Busch, Wallace Beery and Tully Marshall.

The name of the mental giant who thought up that title has not been given out to the public as yet.

Rex Ingram is still on location in Miami, having been there since August. Alice Terry, his wife, is with him, as is Ramon Navarro, who appeared to such decided advantage in "The Prisoner of Zenda" and "Telling Women."

any) for the purpose of showing them "Oliver Twist." For purposes of comparison an old film version of the story was also placed upon the screen.

Douglas MacLean, whose plans have been indefinite since his departure from the Ince corral, has decided to form an independent producing company of his own. Bogart Rogers is to be his general manager.

There is a lively demand for the screen rights to "Merton of the Movies," Harry Leon Wilson's novel which is soon to be seen in dramatic form on Broadway. We fear that much of its kidding will have to be removed before it can pass muster in Hollywood.

"I Am the Law," which, like the United States Shipping Board, has been the victim of various injunctions, will come to the Casino next week. It was scheduled at the Strand some months ago, but the courts interfered.

"Monte Cristo" will end its engagement at the Forty-fourth Street Theater on November 1 and will be followed by "The Village Blacksmith," another Fox picture.

"Monte Cristo" will now venture out into the sticks to learn whether

the world really is his or whether it was all just a rumor.

Alan Dwan is to direct "The Glimpses of the Moon," which has lost no time in invading the movies. Bebe Daniels has arrived in New York to play the principal part.

This, by the way, is Miss Daniels's first visit to our fair city. She has not yet expressed an opinion on the tall buildings.

"The White Sister" is to be Lillian Gish's first picture as an inspiration star. Edmund Goulding has adapted it, and some of the scenes are to be photographed in Italy.

Lady Diana Manners has started work on her second film. It is called "The Virgin Queen" and deals, of course, with the Elizabethan age. In the meantime the studios in this country will continue operations as usual.

THESE ARE IN VAUDEVILLE. The chief acts at the leading vaudeville houses follow: CENTRAL—"Spice of Life" with Sylvia Clark, Dave Kramer and Jack Boyd.

PALACE—Fanny Brice, Eddie Fox and Family and Gloran and Marguerite. RIVERSIDE—Jane and Katherine Lee and Lillian Shaw. EIGHTY-FIRST STREET—Valerie Berge and George Arliss in the photoplay "The Man Who Played God."

LOEW'S STATE—Tarean, trained ape, and Gladys Lelle in the photoplay "Timothy's Quest."

PROCTOR'S FIFTH AVENUE—Maurice Diamond, McLaughlin and Evans.

PROCTOR'S FIFTY-THIRD STREET—Lynn and Howard and Miller and Anthony.

PROCTOR'S FIFTY-EIGHTH STREET—Joe Laurie and McKenna Banks.

PROCTOR'S 125TH STREET—Dolly Kay and band, and Leedom and Gardner.

ON THE SUBWAY CIRCUIT. MAJESTIC THEATER, BROOKLYN—"Tanglefoot" with Julia Sanderson.

TELEVISION THEATER—"The Man Who Saw Tomorrow" with Vivian Martin and Lynne Overman.

MONTEAU THEATER—"The Bat" with Shubert Rivera.

MANHATTAN—"Marjoline."

LIKED THE CRITICISM.

To the Dramatic Editor:

The letter in THE NEW YORK HERALD signed Anna A. Falk and entitled "A Familiar Complaint" has made me wish that more theatergoers would give us criticism of this kind to offset the entirely erroneous impressions gathered from reading what the professional critics have to say. My experience in regard to "Rose Bernd" was similar to Mrs. Falk's. The extravagant praise of the critics had led me to believe it would be a real loss for any one interested in the serious theater to miss this play. Accordingly I went with

a friend to see it last Friday evening. I was keenly anticipating an interesting, even thrilling performance. It seemed to me that Hauptmann could not fail to be stirring, and that it was safe to count on Miss Barrymore. I had seen her in "Dolores," and had never forgotten her splendid portrayal of Lady Helen Hayden.

But in "Rose Bernd" I was doomed to bitter disappointment. In the process of getting the play onto the American stage they have just about ruined it. There were flashes of drama, flashes of tragedy which could not be obliterated, but all that could be spoiled was spoiled.

Like Mrs. Falk, I heard about one-half of Rose's speeches, one-third of Flamm's and lost most of Mrs. Flamm's. Mrs. Falk omitted mention of Bernd, but he also was unparagonably indistinct, especially in his "big scene" toward the end of the play. If it had not been for Streeckman I, too, should have thought that something was wrong with my hearing. (And I was in the fifth row of the orchestra.) But Streeckman proved that it is possible for an actor to get every word across.

Evidently Mrs. Falk missed one line in the first act which I did hear, I. e., Flamm's remark that he had been tied

for years to a wife in a wheel chair. Otherwise I, too, should have wondered whether Mrs. Flamm was Flamm's wife or his mother, for she was made up to look twice his age, and he called her "Mother" throughout the play. Why, oh why? For a man to call his wife "Mother" is not uncommon in some parts of the United States, but what possessed the translator to put it into this German play? And why did he make the characters speak ungrammatical English? And why did Mrs. Flamm continually call Rose "lady," which (at least in my mind's eye) evoked pictures of "bonnie lassies" wandering among the heather?

Instead of all this hodgepodge if we might have had a translation in good, plain English, with at least some attempt to preserve the Continental "atmosphere" of the play, acted by a company who appeared to have studied elocution before coming forth as full fledged actors, with a star who could have given us the illusion of the peasant (Miss Barrymore throughout seemed to be Lady Helen Hayden pretending to be a peasant), then it would have been what the critics very untruthfully said it was—a memorable occasion in the American theater.

FANNY L. PAY.

New York, Oct. 26, 1922.

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